




Reinventing Environmental Protection—EPA's Approach

A MESSAGE FROM EPA'S REINVENTION ACTION COUNCIL



For nearly 3 years, EPA has worked to fulfill the Administration's commitment to reinventing environmental protection, which came as part of an overall effort aimed at making the federal government work better and cost less. During this time, our managers and staff took a hard look at our programs, regulations, and relationships and questioned how we might work smarter to achieve better environmental results. We made significant improvements in a number of important areas, and yet, too often, our staff and our stakeholders do not fully understand what reinvention really means, how it is being managed, and what this strategy means for the way EPA does business. As the senior leadership team responsible for guiding reinvention, we saw a need to provide answers to these questions and to promote a better understanding of our strategy both inside and outside the Agency. This document is meant for that purpose. While it reflects our collective positions on reinvention, it is important to note that this is a living document—one we expect to periodically review and refine in the future.

What is reinvention?

At EPA, reinvention is a broad-based, Agencywide strategy for achieving cleaner, cheaper, smarter results from environmental programs. By rethinking problems and the solutions typically used to solve them, reinvention engages Agency managers and staff in finding better ways of doing business without imposing unnecessary costs and regulatory burdens on society. In addition to strengthening existing programs, this strategy focuses on developing more holistic, multimedia approaches that move beyond the single media focus of the past and that better address today's environmental challenges.

programs, regulations, and policies at the federal, state, and local level, has dramatically improved conditions throughout the United States. Today, the air, land, and water are safer and visibly cleaner despite continued population growth and economic expansion. Despite this progress, unresolved problems, such as polluted runoff, and emerging risks, such as global warming, highlight limitations within the current system. These challenges reinforce the need to continuously pursue new opportunities that promise to be more effective in the future. But, a variety of other factors underscore the need for progressive change, too.

Why reinvent?



Over the past 3 decades, the nation's environmental protection system, comprised of environmental



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- A wider array of policy tools and technological advancements allow environmental problems to be addressed in ways never before possible—e.g., new policies allow market-based trading as a way of achieving environmental goals more cost-effectively; newly developed environmental technologies provide more options in meeting environmental standards.



- The increasing knowledge about environmental issues and the sophistication of stakeholders means additional resources and expertise are available for problem-solving—e.g., state programs have increased in size and competence; many busi-



nesses now have professional environmental staff; concerned citizens groups are actively engaging in environmental projects right in their own neighborhoods.

- The basic concept of environmental protection has evolved beyond just pollution

control to include broader issues, such as pollution prevention, sustainability, and environmental justice—e.g., businesses are looking to cut waste in order to prevent pollution and improve profitability; government agencies are developing incentives that can lead businesses and communities to go beyond compliance and continuously improve environmental performance; citizens demand government policies that ensure equal protection against environmental risks and create economic opportunity for present and future generations.



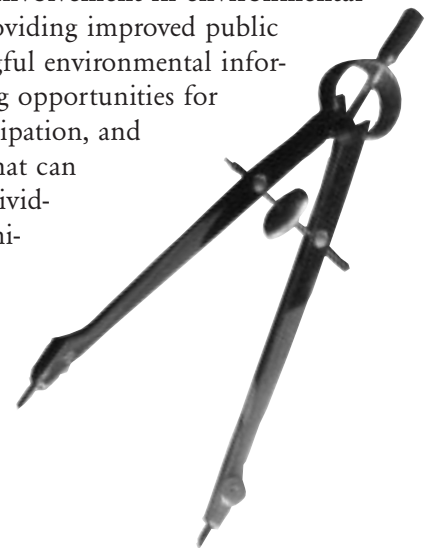
These factors challenge EPA and present the Agency with a fundamental paradox: how to maintain a system that provides strong, consistent protection throughout the country and simultaneously evolves in a responsible manner to accommodate diverse and rapidly changing needs, capabilities, and priorities within society.

How does reinvention affect the way EPA does business?

EPA's response is reflected in its reinvention strategy, which challenges managers and staff to think “outside the box” and to aggressively pursue opportunities that promise better results.

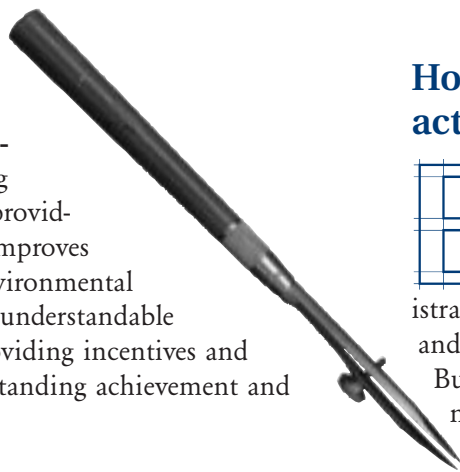
Every part of EPA is encouraged to identify and pursue innovative improvements to its programs and activities. Through this broad-based strategy, EPA is striving to cultivate an organizational culture that:

- Promotes creativity in developing new approaches that promise better efficiency and effectiveness.
- Fosters learning from experience and research so that new information is used to reform programs and policies, as appropriate.
- Encourages testing and adopting innovative policy tools designed to achieve better protection at less cost. By always selecting the best tool for the problem at hand, EPA:
 - Promotes flexibility to achieve desired ends, while ensuring accountability for performance.
 - Creates incentives for technological innovation, pollution prevention, efficient use of natural resources, and superior environmental performance.
- Works in partnership with all levels of government, including states, tribes, local governments, other federal agencies, and other nations.
- Expands public involvement in environmental protection by providing improved public access to meaningful environmental information, increasing opportunities for stakeholder participation, and providing tools that can be applied by individuals and communities at the local level.



- Supports efforts by businesses to protect the environment by minimizing regulatory burden, providing assistance that improves compliance with environmental regulations, writing understandable regulations, and providing incentives and recognition for outstanding achievement and innovative ideas.

This strategy is grounded in the principle that all benefits are to be distributed fairly and that all people must share equal protection from risks to their health and to the environment where they live, learn, and work.



How do all of EPA's reinvention activities fit together?

EPA's reinvention strategy is designed to achieve progressive improvements by streamlining and innovating within existing Agency programs, including air and water regulation, pesticide registration, waste management, Superfund site clean-ups, and other regulatory and nonregulatory programs.

But, reinvention also means developing and testing new approaches that help to integrate environmental protection across traditional media programs and that better address today's environmental challenges. This two-pronged strategic framework is outlined below, along with examples of reinvention activities already underway.

Strategic Framework for Reinvention Activities

Innovate and streamline within EPA core programs

Regulations:

- Consolidate and simplify requirements.
- Write regulations in "plain English."
- Use market-based incentives to encourage pollution prevention and increase operational flexibility.

Permitting:

- Streamline approval processes.
- Harmonize requirements across programs.
- Develop multimedia and facilitywide permits.

Monitoring and reporting:

- Cut unnecessary requirements and allow more flexibility in monitoring methods.
- Reduce requirements to reward excellent environmental performance.

Compliance assistance:

- Set up compliance assistance centers to help selected sectors improve environmental performance.
- Provide incentives for regulated facilities to self-identify and correct environmental problems.

Test and apply more integrative and holistic approaches to environmental protection

Sector and industry-based approaches:

- Test new approaches that integrate environmental requirements for sectors, industries, or facilities.
- Promote voluntary environmental stewardship and continuous improvement in environmental performance by regulated entities.

Community-based environmental protection:

- Support Brownfields redevelopment.
- Develop tools to support local environmental management strategies.

Redefining federal/state roles:

- Expand state participation in the National Environmental Performance Partnership System.
- Jointly test innovative regulatory strategies.

Improve environmental information:

- Establish common data standards and electronic reporting capabilities.
- Develop programs and user-friendly computer applications that expand public access to environmental data.

EPA's REINVENTION ACTION COUNCIL

Headquarters

OFFICE	MEMBER	PHONE	FAX	E-MAIL	ADDRESS
				common suffix: @epa.gov	all HQ offices: 401 M Street, SW. Washington, DC 20460
Reinvention	Associate Administrator Charles Fox*	202/260-1849	202/260-1812	fox.chuck	1801
	Jay Benforado (Deputy)	202/260-4255	202/260-1812	benforado.jay	1803
	Lisa Lund (Deputy)	202/260-2997	202/260-1812	lund.lisa	1802
Administration and Resources Management	Director, Policy & Resource Management John Sandy	202/260-4083	202/260-5419	sandy.john	3102
Air and Radiation	Deputy Assistant Administrator Rob Brenner	202/260-7400	202/260-5155	brenner.rob	6101
Enforcement and Compliance Assurance	Deputy Assistant Administrator Sylvia Lowrance	202/564-2450	202/501-3842	lowrance.sylvia	2201A
General Counsel	Deputy General Counsel Robert Dreher	202/260-8064	202/260-8046	dreher.robert	2310
Inspector General	Deputy Inspector General Nikki L. Tinsley	202/260-1112	202/260-0711	tinsley.nikki	2410
International Activities	Deputy Assistant Administrator Alan Hecht	202/564-6600	202/564-2407	hecht.alan	2610R
Policy, Planning, and Evaluation	Deputy Assistant Administrator Robert Wolcott	202/260-5497	202/260-2300	wolcott.robert	2111
Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances	Deputy Assistant Administrator Susan Wayland	202/260-2910	202/260-1847	wayland.susan	7101
Research and Development	Liaison to Reinvention Stephen Lingle	202/564-6820	202/565-2446	lingle.stephen	8101
Solid Waste and Emergency Response	Deputy Assistant Administrator Michael Shapiro	202/260-4610	202/260-3527	shapiro.mike	5101
Water	Liaison to Reinvention Diane Regas	202/260-9154	202/260-5711	regas.diane	4101
Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations	Deputy Associate Administrator Mike O'Connor	202/260-3870	202/260-7638	oconnor.michael	1301
Chief Financial Officer	Liaison to Reinvention David Ziegele	202/260-9302	202/260-3659	ziegele.david	2721

* Council Chair

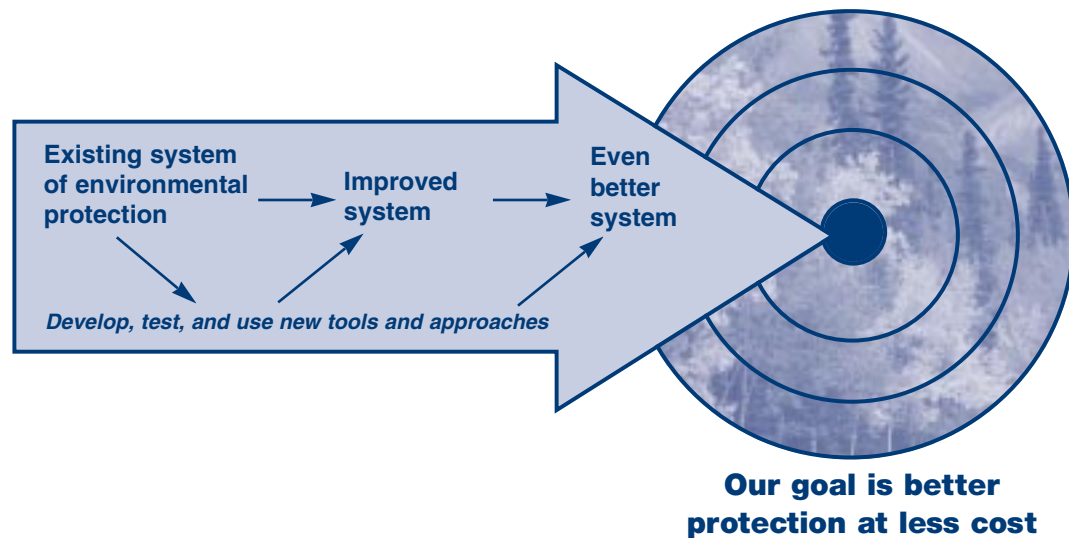
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Regional Offices

REGION	MEMBER	PHONE	FAX	E-MAIL	ADDRESS
				common suffix: @epa.gov	
Region 1	Senior Policy Advisor Mindy Lubber	617/565-3417	617/565-3415	lubber.mindy	JFK Federal Building Boston, MA 02203-0001
Region 2	Deputy Regional Administrator William Muszynski	212/637-5000	212/637-5024	muszynski.william	290 Broadway New York, NY 10007-1866
Region 3	Deputy Regional Administrator Tom Voltaggio	215/566-2900	215/566-5103	voltage.tom	841 Chestnut Building Philadelphia, PA 19107
Region 4	Deputy Regional Administrator A. Stanley Meiburg	404/562-8357	404/562-8174	meiburg.stan	100 Alabama Street, SW. Atlanta, GA 30303
Region 5	Deputy Regional Administrator Michelle Jordan	312/886-3000	312/353-4135	jordan.michelle	77 West Jackson Boulevard Chicago, IL 60604-3507
Region 6	Deputy Regional Administrator Jerry Clifford	214/665-2100	214/665-6648	clifford.jerry	Fountain Place, Suite 1200 1445 Ross Avenue Dallas, TX 75202-2733
Region 7	Deputy Regional Administrator William W. Rice	913/551-7006	913/551-7976	rice.william	726 Minnesota Avenue Kansas City, KS 66101
Region 8	Deputy Regional Administrator Jack McGraw	303/312-6308	303/312-6339	mcgraw.jack	999 18th Street, Suite 500 Denver, CO 80202-2466
Region 9	Associate Regional Administrator Harry Seraydarian	415/744-1091	415/744-2499	seraydarian.harry	75 Hawthorne Street San Francisco, CA 94105
Region 10	Deputy Regional Administrator Charles Findley	206/553-5811	206/553-0149	findley.chuck	1200 Sixth Avenue Seattle, WA 98101

An evolutionary approach to change

EPA's reinvention strategy commits the Agency to acting swiftly on obvious, common sense reforms. But it also ensures thorough testing and evaluation before any fundamentally new approaches are adopted into the nation's environmental protection system. This evolutionary approach to reinventing environmental protection sets the stage for continued progress without compromising the substantial gains that have been achieved through environmental programs over the past 3 decades.



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Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, DC 20460
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